

## 1. ISAIAH SERIES: An Introduction

Before we begin our study of Isaiah, let me suggest that during the course of time between this study and the next that you read the entire book of Isaiah. Be sure to read it at least once, but if you have the opportunity, a second reading of the book will also be helpful.

As we work our way through Isaiah it will be useful to read through the study prior to attempting to answer any questions in it and prior to looking up any of the references. Once read through I suggest going through the study again (perhaps in your next study session), but this time looking up the references and answering the questions. Once you have done this, a further study session could be used for doing research into the Individual Discovery questions that are asked at the end of each study as a way for preparing for the next study in the series.

Of course you may choose to use the study notes any way you wish, yet the above suggestions seem to me to be the way to use these studies for the greatest profit. A further suggestion for maximum profit in the use of these studies would be to use them in a group situation in the format suggested above. If you are unable to study with the benefit of a small group, perhaps you might like to make use of the mail group available via the Aussie Outpost web site at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OutpostStudies>.

### HOW WILL WE STUDY ISAIAH?

The Spirit of God is the Author of the Bible (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20,21), and therefore of the Book of Isaiah, so we will be seeking His illumination. He alone is able to teach us the true meaning of His Word, and therefore of Isaiah.

With prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit we will seek to understand the Book of Isaiah. However, God often uses means to accomplish His ends, and it would be extremely arrogant of us if we did not seek to use the means that He has put at our disposal. So anything that helps us to understand the text will be of benefit to us. We shall use the means, thanking God for them, yet trusting God and not the means.

We want to try and come to grips with what the Lord is saying through this book verse by verse, chapter by chapter, section by section. We want to pull the book apart, and get

everything we can out of it.

Our approach therefore will be to study manageable portions of Isaiah at a time. But we will not be content with gleaning intellectual knowledge alone. Rather we will also seek to bring the Word of God to bear upon our own lives, seeing its practical implications for ourselves, and then to live accordingly (James 1:21-27).

**QUESTION:** In your own words, explain why you should study the Book of Isaiah? Comment on any other reasons that you may think relevant to your own study of Isaiah.

## **ISAIAH THE MAN**

There is little in this book about the man Isaiah himself. We do however capture a few glimpses of Isaiah the man throughout his prophecy. There are glimpses of his fears (8:11-18), his compassion, his love, and his tenderness (15:5), and also of his great hope (12).

This is a man who is the mouthpiece of God (6), proclaiming both the judgment of God and the salvation of God. This is a man who though being the mouthpiece of God, feels much for the people to whom he prophesies.

Isaiah's name is also of significance, for it means 'Jehovah has saved' or 'salvation is of the Lord.' The name points to his message, for his message throughout is that God is the source of salvation.

Isaiah was a married man with two children, Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalel-Hash-Baz (Is 7:3; 8:1-3).

Isaiah's ministry began in the year that King Uzziah died, around 740 BC (6:1), to Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah around 701 BC. His ministry stretched four Judahite kings (1:1).

Though speculation, Isaiah may have been killed by Hezekiah's son Manasseh, during a time of persecution by that king (2 Kings 21:16).

The Book of Isaiah is made up of 66 chapters, and is referred to about 210 times in the New Testament.

Isaiah has been affectionately nick-named 'the Evangelical Prophet,' because of his prophesy and preaching concerning Christ.

## **CONTEXT OF ISAIAH**

To understand the message of Isaiah it will be profitable to understand the historical

setting and background of the book, as this can often shed light on the text. So a short consideration or overview of the context of Isaiah is in order.

Isaiah's ministry would see four kings in Judah - Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Is 1:1). His ministry actually began in the year that King Uzziah died, 740 BC (6:1).

Uzziah, the first King of Isaiah's ministry was 16 years old when he became co-regent with his father Amaziah (790 BC), and ruled for 52 years (2 Kings 15:2; 2 Chron 26). His reign was one of prosperity (2 Kings 14:21-15:7; 2 Chron 26:1-23) and expansion. However it was a time of spiritual decline (Is 1), a decline which had begun with King Jehoram.

The decline from Jehoram was marked by idolatry, cultism and false religion. The people had embraced false gods, and were steadily falling further away from God. This decline continued with Uzziah being judged by God for his pride. There was much formalism, unbelief, rebellion against God, corruption, and ungodliness within Judah (Is 1).

Rising up in the northeast were two nations that would soon set their mark upon the world, Assyria and Babylon. The Assyrian reign of dominance, expansion, and terror was imminent. It would be a cruel empire of barbaric armies who would slaughter many, including women and children, and carry whole nations into captivity in foreign countries.

With the death of Uzziah, Jotham reigned as King of Judah. It was during the days of Jotham that the Syria-Israel coalition began their attacks on Judah. The Syria-Ephraimitic War got into full swing during the reign of King Ahaz, with the united forces of Rezin (Syria) and Pekah (Israel) inflicting heavy losses upon Judah (2 Kings 15:36-16:6; 2 Chron 28:5-15).

Ahaz, with an appeal to Assyria for help became a vassal to Assyria. The Assyrians responded to his plea by destroying Syria, and capturing several tribes of Israel, and making Ahaz a vassal (2 Kings 16:7-18; 2 Chron 28:16,20,21).

The Assyrian kings during Isaiah's ministry were Tiglath-Pileassar III (2 Kings 15:29; 16:7), Shalmaneser V (2 Kings 17:3), Sargon II, and Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:16,20).

The Northern Kingdom of Israel eventually fell completely to Assyria and was carried away into captivity (2 Kings 17:1-23) in around 722 BC.

The gradation of God's judgment is to be seen in Isaiah. He gave many opportunities to repent, but they wouldn't heed God. First came the combined forces of Israel and Syria, and also Edom and Philistia (2 Chron 28:17-19). The Assyrians then came under Tiglath-Pileassar, taking the northern tribes of Israel. Then under Shalmaneser all of Israel was taken, and Judah became a vassal state. Under Hezekiah Judah felt the brunt of Assyrian might, and was on the verge of destruction. All that remained and untaken by Sennacherib

was Jerusalem.

Judah which had been enjoying something of a spiritual revival under Hezekiah, was delivered from the Assyrians by God Himself (2 Kings 19:35-37; 2 Chron 32:2-23; Is 37:36-38).

Following the extension of Hezekiah's life, he sinned, and the prophesy of Babylonian conquest as the means of God's judgment is made (2 Kings 20:12-19; 2 Chron 32:31; Is 39).

There is also the promise of return from the Babylonian exile through the Persian King, Cyrus (Is 45).

Throughout the entire book there is the promise of the future restoration of the kingdom through the salvation of the Lord. This is a salvation that will include peoples from the whole world over.

## **WHY STUDY ISAIAH?**

Apart from Isaiah being part of the revealed Word of God, there are many reasons for studying Isaiah, especially note the following:

(i) Because Isaiah teaches that God can and will become the enemy of professors of true religion who rebel against Him (Is 30:8-17; 34:1ff; 63:10).

(ii) Because Isaiah clearly shows the sovereignty and providence of God. It shows that everything falls under the control of God (Is 3; 5:26-30; 10:15-19).

(iii) Because Isaiah shows that salvation is of the Lord, and none other.

(iv) Because Isaiah shows that God is determined to save a people (Gen 3:15; 12:3). He is in control, and He will bring it to pass, even if the circumstances appear otherwise (Is 7; 37:36-38).

(v) Because Isaiah teaches the true nature and extent of salvation. He teaches that the bondage of the nation is the result of sin, and is a type of that greater bondage of man to sin.

(vi) To be right with God Judah needed to be delivered from their bondage, which God alone can do. The deliverance through Cyrus is a type of that deliverance that comes from bondage to sin.

(vi) Isaiah points forward to the one who would deliver them from this greater bondage, even Immanuel. This deliverance would embrace people the world over and together they would enjoy this salvation in the promised one.

Study is by Kevin Matthews. It is suggested that this notice be included as is. Thankyou.